

Ode Upon an Open Brain

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Coy and voiceless mistress of furtive looks,
silent singer of all verses and rhymes,
penless writer of all music and books,
the perpetrator behind all men's crimes,
what passions must dance within your dark chasms:
of lovers, or enemies, or of both!
What are these struggles masked as mere twitches?
Remembering the pangs of childhood growth,
or some incipient vascular spasms?
Dare I probe further, or close with stitches?

Drill one inch the more, take one bite the less,
it cannot reduce the sphenoid's curved grace;
Now vanishing beneath my drill's caress,
fixed in mind, though no longer in its place.
Look, see the brain here uncovered, ungowned,
but the mind unseen. In silence — no mind.
Yet in thinking thoughts, thought makes known itself.
And so words unspoken are still a kind
of speech. To their thinker known and brain bound,
speaking her, making her, heard by herself.

And what thoughts! Minds can hold all the pleasures
of earth in an ounce of brain, while the rest
dreams an infinitude of new treasures.
If this power stirs at the mind's request,
to see life, to know life, to create life,
why then must Prometheus still be bound?
Why can we not escape these shapes of scorn?
Why must the brain take the mind underground?
For all, mortality is the midwife
of discord, pass'd from fathers to newborn.

What to do? Trapped in this captivity
to struggle, to fight, doubtlessly to die.
For this we twist our creativity;
the mind's deadliest weapon is the lie.
Still when the last spark courses through our brains
gone are all our earthly gains. If shared thought,
however, lives on its own, mark these words:
to speak, to write, to make, this is wrought
immortality. Through the years our gains
put down in books, prove pens triumph o'er swords.

Listen to Eric Karl Oermann read this poem, available exclusively on *Neurology*® for the iPad®.

Perhaps it is not an indignity
to be trapped in form and in flesh. The mind
creates its love and song and poetry,
strengthened by ties to other minds that bind
it further with every breath. It may be
that our earthly fetters are in fact light.
As icy air in lungs can turn to song,
mortality is not for us to fight
but embrace, and in doing be set free.
Write! Our creations can our lives prolong.

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